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Postsecondary Education Community Meets To Discuss Master Plan Implementation, Honor Governor

Members of all of Louisiana's postsecondary education boards, along with system and campus representatives, met today in Baton Rouge at the Pennington Conference Center to discuss implementation progress of Louisiana's Master Plan for Public Postsecondary Education. The group also took advantage of the event, called the "Louisiana Postsecondary Education Leadership Forum," to honor Governor Mike Foster for his commitment to higher education reform during his two terms in office.

"This event marks the half-way point in the planned five-year implementation of the Master Plan," said Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie. "The forum is an important opportunity for us to come together as a community and evaluate our progress and to work together to map out our path forward."

Approximately 150 attendees from across the state, representing virtually all of Louisiana's four-year universities and community colleges and the Louisiana Technical College, as well as the various systems and their boards, heard a presentation by Commissioner of Higher Education Joseph Savoie on the goals and responsibilities of postsecondary education management boards and postsecondary education's progress and continuing challenges.

"We simply must provide higher levels of education to more citizens if we are going to be anywhere near a competitive state," said Commissioner Savoie. "That's why the Master Plan calls for increased access to postsecondary education. But that idea is clarified by what we call 'access for *success*.' We have to improve retention and graduation rates in college. It's not just about letting students in the door - it's about them leaving with a credential in their hand and the socioeconomic opportunity that comes with it."

The morning session was rounded out by a presentation entitled "Transforming Secondary Education in Louisiana," by Tom Williams, of Noel-Levitz, the nation's largest college-enrollment

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Postsecondary Education Master Plan Meeting

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management firm.

“This is *your* plan that we’re following,” Williams told attendees, referencing the enrollment management programs and strategies that Noel-Levitz is helping each campus develop and implement in preparation for the expected change in enrollment dynamics when new four-year university admissions criteria called for in the Master Plan are fully implemented. “Our contribution has been at the organizational and planning levels. But you and your staffs are responsible for the progress that has been made, and all of the praise goes to you.”

The event luncheon was dedicated to the honor of Governor Mike Foster, who was in attendance along with members of his administrative team. The Board of Regents and each of the postsecondary education system boards made presentations to Governor Foster in recognition of his key leadership role in higher education reform during his tenure as governor.

The day was capped off with breakout meetings for each of the system boards and their staffs to discuss system- and campus-specific aspects of Master Plan implementation and the path forward for postsecondary education reform in Louisiana.

The Master Plan, introduced in 2000, calls for (among other reforms) significant improvement in postsecondary education *access* and student *success*. Among the strategies being pursued to achieve this goal is the implementation of more stringent admissions criteria at all Louisiana public four-year universities by the fall of 2005. The new criteria include successful completion of the Regents’ (currently TOPS) core curriculum *plus* any *one* of the following: an ACT score of 20 or higher, a GPA of 2.0 or higher, or a class ranking in the 50%. (These are minimum requirements; some institutions will have more stringent admissions criteria.)

The Louisiana education community will gather again next week in Baton Rouge to host the first gubernatorial forum of the runoff campaign. The forum will be broadcast live statewide by LPB on Tuesday, October 14, from 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.